Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------301058Z 052796 /10
R 291331Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3853
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2011

EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS TO USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR LE US SY PLO
SUBJ: IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORD: VIEWS OF FONMIN BOUTROS

1. DURING CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS APRIL 28, HE ASKED ME WHAT WE THOUGHT PROSPECTS WERE FOR IMPLEMENTATION CAIRO ACCORD. I SAID I HAD BEEN ABOUT TO ASK HIM SAME QUESTION. EVENTS OF PAST WEEK, IN WHICH HEAVILY-ARMED SYRIAN FORCE USING TANKS HAD DESTROYED NUMBER OF APARTMENT BUILDINGS AND KILLED MANY INNOCENT CIVILIANS IN ATTEMPT, SUCCESS OF WHICH NOT CLEAR, TO BRING UNDER CONTROL GROUP OF PALESTINIANS ESTIMATED NUMBER 100, INDICATED DIFFICULTY OF PROBLEM. WE GATHERED, HOWEVER, THAT SYRIANS WERE STILL COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTATION CAIRO ACCORD.

2. BOUTROS SAID HE FEARED IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORD NOT WITHIN PHYSICAL CAPABILITY OF SYRIANS, EVEN WERE THEY WILLING TAKE POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL RISK WHICH WOULD BE INVOLVED IN THEIR TAKING ON THE PALESTINIANS. SYRIANS MIGHT BE WILLING TO
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TRY BUT RESULT LIKELY ESTABLISH THEIR NET INFERIORITY VIS-A-VIS PALESTINIANS, AND THIS WOULD BE MISTAKE. THIS WAS VERY DEPRESSING STATE OF AFFAIRS AND HE WONDERED WHETHER WE HAD ANY SUGGESTIONS AS TO WHAT LEBANESE COULD DO. WAS THERE SOME DIPLOMATIC ACTION THEY COULD TAKE WHICH MIGHT HELP?

3. I SAID IT SEEMED TO ME THERE WERE TWO THEORETICAL POSSIBILI-

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TIES. ONE WAS TO GET SAUDIS, KUWAITIS AND EGYPTIANS TO GIVE UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT TO SYRIAN IMPLEMENTATION OF ACCORD. OTHER, WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN DISCUSSED AND REJECTED, WAS POSSIBILITY OF INTERNATIONAL FORCE IN SOUTH, WHICH MIGHT HELP SITUATION THERE BUT WOULD NOT HELP SITUATION IN BEIRUT. BOUTROS SHOOK HIS HEAD INDICATING HE DID NOT THINK EITHER OF THESE IDEAS WORKABLE AND ASKED THAT USG GIVE FURTHER THOUGHT TO WHAT MIGHT BE DONE. HE LOOKED FORWARD TO DISCUSSING THIS WITH ME ON MY RETURN FROM CONSULTATION. (BOUTROS HIMSELF IS LEAVING FOR BRUSSELS MAY FIRST AND WILL NOT BE BACK UNTIL JUST BEFORE MY DEPARTURE.)

4. I SAID WE HAD HEARD FROM DAMASCUS THAT ASAD HAD CONVEYED VIA COLONEL KHOLI SOVIET GUARANTEES REGARDING SECURITY OF LEBANON, ITS SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. WE ALSO UNDERSTOOD SYRIANS FELT SECURITY IN SOUTH COULD BE ESTABLISHED BY EMPLOYING VANGUARDS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY (DAMASCUS 2665). BOUTROS SMILED WEAKLY AND SAID THIS WAS SIMPLY FOR INTERNAL SYRIAN CONSUMPTION. JUST WHAT WAS IT SOVIETS WERE GOING TO GUARANTEE AND HOW? EVERYONE KNEW THAT THE VANGUARDS COULD NOT BE USED AS A FORCE IN THE SOUTH AND THAT WAS NOT A SERIOUS PROPOSITION.

5. RETURNING TO QUESTION OF IMPLEMENTATION CAIRO ACCORD, BOUTROS SAID THERE WOULD BE NO STABILITY UNLESS PLO LAID DOWN ALL ITS ARMS AND CHRISTIANS DID THE SAME. AS THINGS NOW STOOD, HE COULD NOT VISUALIZE SYRIANS BRINGING THIS ABOUT. HE WAS VERY UNHAPPY WITH STATE OF AFFAIRS.

6. COMMENT: BOUTROS MORE DEPRESSED THAN ANY TIME SINCE MY ARRIVAL HERE. SARKIS GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN UNUSUALLY (FOR IT)
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STRONG POSITION ON IMPLEMENTATION CAIRO AGREEMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS INTERPRETATION. IT APPARENTLY HAS DONE SO IN BELIEF SYRIANS WOULD BE WILLING AND ABLE TO IMPLEMENT IT UNILATERALLY IF NECESSARY. THEY APPARENTLY COMING TO CONCLUSION SYRIANS HAVE NEITHER DIPLOMATIC NOR MILITARY ABILITY TO DO SO AND THIS IS EXTREMELY DISTURBING TO THEM. MY DCM AND DATT DO NOT SHARE BOUTROS'S PESSIMISM AS TO SYRIAN CAPABILITIES, BUT I DO.
PARKER

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED USCINCEUR.

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
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Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
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Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2815002
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORD: VIEWS OF FONMIN BOUTROS
TAGS: PFOR, LE, US, SY, PLO, (BOUTROS, FOUAD)
To: STATE CAIRO
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8c41b2a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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US Department of State
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